A watercolor illustration of a young woman with brown hair styled in an updo with a purple ribbon. She is wearing a light-colored dress with a high collar and is holding a book with a green and yellow checkered cover. The book has a small illustration of a person on the yellow label. She is looking down at the book with a slight smile.

# A HOOSIER ROMANCE

*by James Whitcomb Riley*

**JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY**

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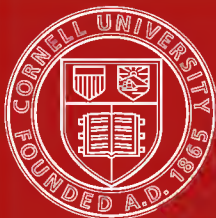
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A Hoosier romance /



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# A HOOSIER ROMANCE

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John W. Allen's Design



# A HOOSIER ROMANCE

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BY JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY  
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
JOHN WOLCOTT ADAMS

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TO  
JESSE C. MILLIKAN



# A HOOSIER ROMANCE



I HAIN'T no hand at tellin' tales,  
Er spinnin' yarns, as the sailors say ;  
Someway o' 'nother, language fails  
To slide fer me in the oily way  
That *lawyers* has ; and I wisht it would  
Fer I 've got somepin' that I call good ;  
But bein' only a country squire,  
I 've learned to listen and admire,

A HOOSIER ROMANCE

Ruther preferrin' to be addressed  
Than talk myse'f—but I 'll do my best:—

Old Jeff Thompson—well, I 'll say,  
Was the clos'test man I ever saw!—  
*Rich* as cream, but the porest pay,  
And the meanest man to work fer — La!  
I 've knowed that man to work one  
“hand”—

Fer little er nothin', you understand—  
From four o'clock in the morning light  
Tel eight and nine o'clock at night,  
And then find fault with his appetite!



## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

He 'd drive all over the neighborhood  
To miss the place where a toll-gate stood,  
And slip in town, by some old road  
That no two men in the county knowed,  
With a jag o' wood, and a sack o' wheat,  
That would n't burn and you could n't eat!  
And the trades he 'd make, 'll I jest de-  
clare,  
Was enough to make a preacher swear!  
And then he 'd hitch, and hang about  
Tel the lights in the toll-gate was blowed  
out,  
And then the turnpike he 'd turn in  
And sneak his way back home ag'in!





## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

Some folks hint, and I make no doubt,  
That that 's what wore his old wife out -  
Toilin' away from day to day  
And year to year, through heat and cold  
Uncomplainin'— the same old way  
The martyrs died in the days of old;  
And a-clingin', too, as the martyrs done,  
To one fixed faith, and her *only* one,—  
Little Patience, the sweetest child  
That ever wept unrickonciled,  
Er felt the pain and the ache and sting  
That only a mother's death can bring.



## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

Patience Thompson!—I think that name  
Must a-come from a power above,  
Fer it seemed to fit her jest the same  
As a *gaiter* would, er a fine kid glove!  
And to see that girl, with all the care  
Of the household on her—I de-clare  
It was *oudacious*, the work she 'd do,  
And the thousand plans that she 'd putt  
    through;  
And sing like a medder-lark all day long,  
And drownd her cares in the joys o' song;



A HOOSIER ROMANCE

And *laugh* sometimes tel the farmer's  
"hand,"

Away fur off in the fields, would stand  
A-listenin', with the plow half drawn,  
Tel the coaxin' echoes called him on;  
And the furries seemed, in his dreamy  
eyes,

Like footpaths a-leadin' to Paradise,  
As off through the hazy atmosphere  
The call fer dinner reached his ear.



## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

Now *love* 's as cunnin' a little thing  
As a hummin'-bird upon the wing,  
And as liable to poke his nose  
Jest where folks would least suppose,—  
And more 'n likely build his nest  
Right in the heart you 'd leave unguessed,  
And live and thrive at your expense—  
At least, that 's *my* experience.





## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

And old Jeff Thompson often thought,  
In his se'fish way, that the quiet John  
Was a stiddy chap, as a farm-hand *ought*  
To always be,—fer the airliest dawn  
Found John busy—and “*easy*,” too,  
Whenever his *wages* would fall due!—  
To sum him up with a final touch,  
He *eat* so little and *worked* so much,  
That old Jeff laughed to hisse'f and said,  
“He makes *me* money and airns his bread!”  
But John, fer all of his quietude,  
Would sometimes drap a word er so  
That none but *Patience* understood,  
And none but her was *meant* to know!—



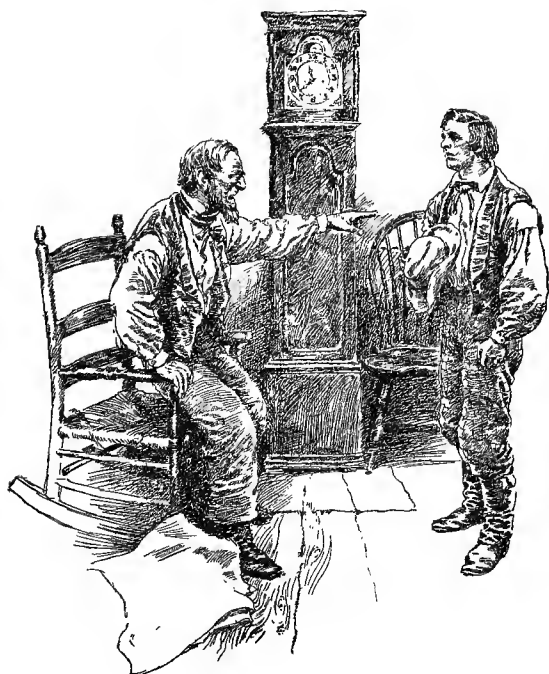
A HOOSIER ROMANCE

Mayby at meal-times John would say,  
As the sugar-bowl come down his way,  
“Thanky, no; *my* coffee ’s sweet  
Enough fer *me!*” with sich conceit,  
*She* ’d know at once, without no doubt  
*He* meant because *she* poured it out;  
And smile and blush, and all sich stuff  
And ast ef it was “*strong* enough?”  
And git the answer, neat and trim,  
“It *could n’t* be too ‘strong’ fer *him!*”



## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

And so things went fer 'bout a year,  
Tel John, at last, found pluck to go  
And pour his tale in the old man's ear—  
And ef it had been *hot lead*, I know  
It could n't a-raised a louder fuss,  
Ner a-riled the old man's temper wuss!  
He jest *lit* in, and cussed and swore,  
And lunged and rared, and ripped and tore  
And told John just to leave his door,  
And not to darken it no more!



## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

But Patience cried, with eyes all wet,  
“Remember, John, and don’t ferget,  
*Whatever* comes, I love you yet!”  
But the old man thought, in his se’fish way,  
“I ’ll see her married rich some day;  
And *that*,” thinks he, “is money fer *me*—  
And my will ’s *law*, as it ought to be!”





## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

So when, in the course of a month er so,  
A *widower*, with a farm er two,  
Comes to Jeff's, w'y, the folks, you know  
Had to *talk*—as the folks 'll do:  
It was the talk of the neighborhood—  
*Patience* and *John*, and *their* affairs;—  
And this old chap with a few gray hairs  
Had “cut John out,” it was understood.  
And some folks reckoned “*Patience*, too,  
Knowed what *she* was a-goin' to do—  
It was *like* her—la! indeed!—  
All *she* loved was *dollars* and *cents*—  
*Like old Jeff*—and they saw no need  
Fer *John* to pine at *her* negligence!”



## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

But others said, in a *kinder* way,  
They missed the songs she used to sing—  
They missed the smiles that used to play  
Over her face, and the laughin' ring  
Of her glad voice—that *everything*  
Of her *old* se'f seemed dead and gone,  
And this was the ghost that they gazed on!



## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

Tel finally it was noised about  
There was a *weddin'* soon to be  
Down at Jeff's; and the "cat was out"  
Shore enough!—'Ll the *Jee-mun-nee!*  
It *riled* me when John told me so,—  
Fer *I was a friend o' John's*, you know;  
And his trimblin' voice jest broke in two --  
As a feller's voice 'll sometimes do.—  
And I says, says I, "Ef I know my biz—  
And I think I know what *jestice* is,—  
I 've read *some* law—and I 'd advise  
A man like you to wipe his eyes,



## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

And square his jaws and start *ag'in*,

*Fer jestice is a-goin' to win!"*

And it was n't long tel his eyes had cleared

As blue as the skies, and the *sun* appeared

In the shape of a good old-fashioned smile

That I had n't seen fer a long, long while.

So we talked on fer a' hour er more,

And sunned ourselves in the open door,—

Tel a hoss-and-buggy down the road

Come a-drivin' up, that I guess John

*knowed,—*





A HOOSIER ROMANCE

Fer he winked and says, "I 'll dessap-  
pear—

*They 'd* smell a mice ef they saw *me* here!"

And he thumbbed his nose at the old gray  
mare,

And hid hisse'f in the house somewhere.

Well.—The rig drove up: and I raised  
my head

As old Jeff hollered to me and said  
That "him and his old friend there had  
come

To see ef the squire was at home."



## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

. . . I told 'em "I was; and I *aimed* to be  
At every chance of a weddin'-fee!"

And then I laughed—and they laughed,  
too,—

Fer that was the object they had in view.

Would I be on hands at eight that night?"

They ast: and 's-I, "You 're mighty right,  
*I'll* be on hands!" And then I bu'st

Out a-laughin' my very wu'st,—

And so did they, as they wheeled away

And drove to'rds town in a cloud o' dust.

Then I shet the door, and me and John

Laughed and *laughed*, and jest *laughed* on,



## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

Tel Mother drapped her specs, and *by*  
*Jeewhillikers!* I thought she 'd *die!*—  
And she could n't a-told, I 'll bet my hat  
What on earth she was laughin' at!

But all o' the fun o' the tale hain't done!—  
Fer a drizzlin' rain had jest begun,  
And a-havin' 'bout four mile' to ride,  
I jest concluded I 'd better light  
Out fer Jeff's and save my hide,—  
Fer *it was a-goin' to storm, that night!*  
So we went down to the barn, and John  
Saddled my beast, and I got on;



## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

And he told me somepin' to not ferget,  
And when I left, he was *laughin'* yet.

And, 'proachin' on to my journey's end,  
The great big draps o' the rain come down,  
And the thunder growled in a way to lend  
An awful look to the lowerin' frown  
The dull sky wore; and the lightnin' glanced  
Tel my old mare jest *more 'n* pranced,  
And tossed her head, and bugged her eyes  
To about four times their natchurl size,  
As the big black lips of the clouds 'ud drap  
Out some oath of a thunder-clap,





## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

And threaten on in an undertone  
That chilled a feller clean to the bone!

But I struck shelter soon enough  
To save myse'f. And the house was  
jammed  
With the women-folks, and the weddin'-  
stuff:—

A great, long table, fairly *crammed*  
With big pound-cakes—and chops and  
steaks—

And roasts and stews—and stumick-aches  
Of every fashion, form, and size,  
From twisters up to punkin-pies!



## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

And candies, oranges, and figs,  
And reezins,—all the “whilligigs”  
And “jim-cracks” that the law allows  
On sich occasions! — Bobs and bows  
Of gigglin’ girls, with corkscrew curls,  
And fancy ribbons, reds and blues,  
And “beau-ketchers” and “curliques”  
To beat the world! And seven o’clock  
Brought old Jeff;—and brought—*the*  
*groom*,—  
With a sideboard-collar on, and stock  
That choked him so, he had n’t room



## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

To *swaller* in, er even sneeze,  
Er clear his th'oat with any ease  
Er comfort—and a good square cough  
Would saw his Adam's-apple off!

But as fer *Patience*—*My!* Oomh-  
*oomh!*—

I never saw her look so sweet!—  
Her face was cream and roses, too;  
And then them eyes o' heavenly blue  
Jest made an angel all complete!  
And when she split 'em up in smiles  
And splintered 'em around the room,  
And danced acrost and met the groom,



## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

And *laughed out loud*— It kind o' spiles  
My language when I come to that—  
Fer, as she laid away his hat,  
Thinks I, "*The papers hid inside*  
*Of that said hat must make a bride*  
*A happy one fer all her life,*  
Er else a *wrecked and wretched wife!*"





## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

And, someway, then, I thought of *John*,—  
Then looked to'rds *Patience*. . . . She  
was *gone*!—

The door stood open, and the rain  
Was dashin' in; and sharp and plain  
Above the storm we heerd a cry—  
A ringin', laughin', loud "Good-by!"  
That died away, as fleet and fast  
A hoss's hoofs went splashin' past!



A HOOSIER ROMANCE

And that was all. 'T was done that  
quick! . . .

You 've heerd o' fellers "lookin' sick"?  
I wisht you 'd seen *the groom* jest then—  
I wisht you 'd seen them two old men,  
With starin' eyes that fairly *glared*  
At one another, and the scared  
And empty faces of the crowd,—  
I wisht you could a-been allowed  
To jest look on and see it all,—  
And heerd the girls and women bawl



## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

And wring their hands; and heerd old  
Jeff

A-cussin' as he swung hisse'f

Upon his hoss, who champed his bit

As though old Nick had holt of it:

And cheek by jowl the two old wrecks

Rode off as though they 'd break their  
necks.

And as we all stood starin' out

Into the night, I felt the brush

Of some one's hand, and turned about,

And heerd a voice that whispered,

*"Hush! —*

A HOOSIER ROMANCE

*They 're waitin' in the kitchen, and*  
*You 're wanted. Don't you understand?*  
Well, ef my *memory* serves me now,  
I think I winked.—Well, anyhow,  
I left the crowd a-gawkin' there,  
And jest slipped off around to where  
The back-door opened, and went in,  
And turned and shet the door ag'in,  
And mayby *locked* it—could n't swear,  
A woman's arms around me makes  
Me liable to make mistakes.—  
I read a marriage license nex',  
But as I did n't have my specs

## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

I jest *inferred* it was all right,  
And tied the knot so mortal-tight  
That Patience and my old friend John  
Was safe enough from that time on!

Well now I might go on and tell  
How all the joke at last leaked out,  
And how the youngsters raised the yell  
And rode the happy groom about  
Upon their shoulders; how the bride  
Was kissed a hunderd times beside  
The one *I* give her,—tel she cried  
And laughed untel she like to died!

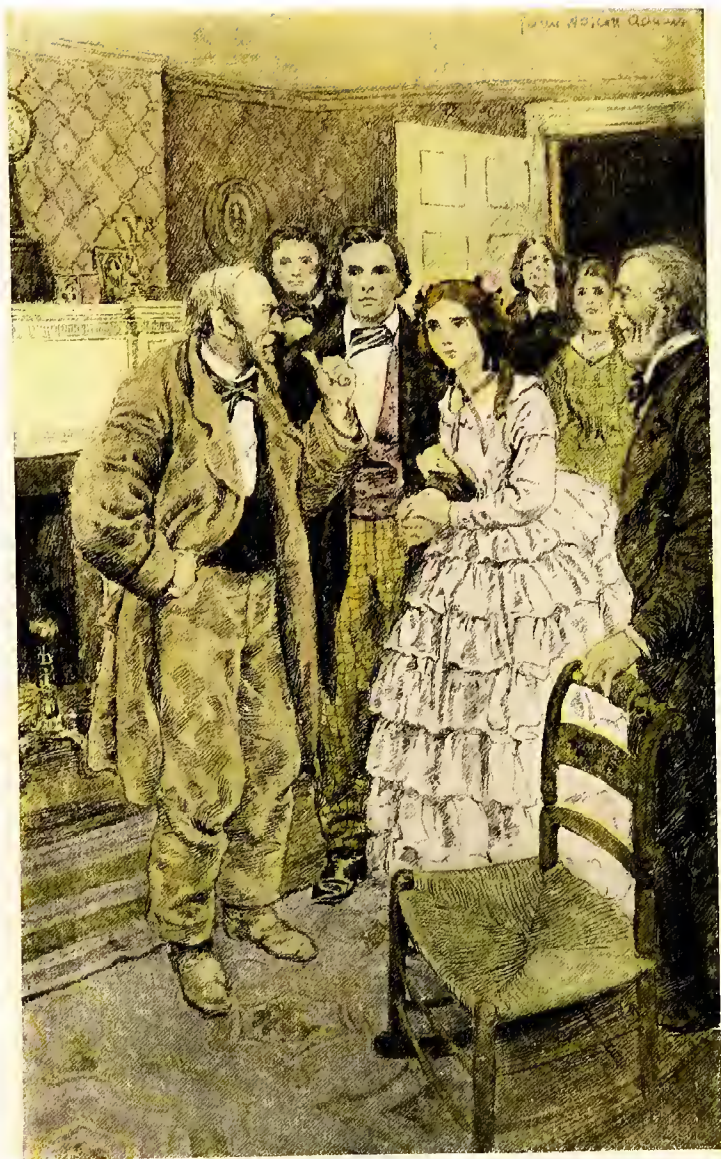


## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

I might go on and tell you all  
About the supper—and the *ball*.—  
You 'd ought to see me twist my heel  
Through jest one old Furginny reel  
Afore you die! er tromp the strings  
Of some old fiddle tel she sings  
Some old cowtillion, don't you know,  
That putts the devil in yer toe!  
We kep' the dancin' up tel *four*  
O'clock, I reckon—mayby more.—  
We hardly heerd the thunder's roar,  
Er *thought* about the *storm* that blowed  
*And them two fellers on the road!*

## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

Tel all at onc't we heerd the door  
Bu'st open, and a voice that *swore*,—  
And old Jeff Thompson tuck the floor.  
He shuck hisse'f and looked around  
Like some old dog about half-drown'd—  
*His hat*, I reckon, *weighed ten pound*  
To say the least, and I 'll say, *shore*,  
His *overcoat weighed fifty* more—  
*The wettest man you ever saw,*  
*To have so dry a son-in-law!*  
He sized it all; and Patience laid  
Her hand in John's, and looked afraid,  
And waited. And a stiller set  
O' folks, I *know*, you never met



## A HOOSIER ROMANCE

In any court-room, where with dread

They wait to hear a verdict read.

The old man turned his eyes on me :

“And have you married 'em?” says he.

I nodded “Yes.” “Well, that 'll do,”

He says, “and now we 're th'ough with

*you,—*

*You* jest clear out, and I decide

And promise to be satisfied!”

He had n't nothin' more to say.

I saw, of course, how matters lay,

And left. But as I rode away

I heerd the roosters crow fer day.







